

THE SAINT AMBROSE PRAYER BOOK

THE *Saint Ambrose Prayer Book*, a beautiful new publication of Lancelot Andrewes Press, stands within a long tradition of books of personal devotion, beginning with the medieval Books of Hours and Primers.* More recent examples of such traditional books of devotion are well-known to Roman Catholics (*The Baltimore Book of Prayers, Blessed Be God*), Anglo-Catholics (*The Treasury of Devotion, Saint Augustine's Prayer Book*), and Eastern Orthodox (*The Jordanville Orthodox Prayer Book*, or the Antiochian Archdiocese's *Pocket Prayer Book for Orthodox Christians*). What makes *The Saint Ambrose Prayer Book* unique is that it is designed specifically for use by Orthodox Catholic Christians of the Western Rite.

The Saint Ambrose Prayer Book includes over 450 pages of classic Western Catholic devotions adapted for use by Orthodox Catholic Christians. It follows the basic missionary philosophy of the Western Rite as endorsed by the Patriarchate of Antioch and practiced by the Western Rite Vicariate since 1958: namely, the loving preservation of all those elements of the Western Catholic tradition (ancient, medieval and modern) which are consonant with the faith of the holy Orthodox Church, to the glory of the Blessed Trinity and for the salvation of souls. The editor, the Very Reverend John G. Winfrey, notes in the forward that the Prayer Book "has been compiled from several various western devotional prayer books, and considerable work has been expended to ensure that the prayers and devotions herein are thoroughly Orthodox."

Some of the faithful may be unfamiliar with *The Saint Ambrose Prayer Book's* rendering of scriptural passages. It follows the Douay-Rheims translation of the Latin Vulgate (the liturgical standard of the Western liturgical tradition), similar in some ways to its Protestant cousin, the Authorised Version ("King James"), but much closer to the Greek Septuagint (the Bible of Jesus and the Apostles, and of the Orthodox Church). Likewise, those familiar with the traditional Anglican translation of the *Te Deum* may find the *Saint Ambrose* translation to be challenging, but far closer to the meaning and structure of the original Latin text than the familiar Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* rendering.

Some readers may be surprised by the inclusion of prayers and devotions in honour of the most sacred Heart of our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ. This, as Father Winfrey notes, is an example of "reviewing long-established western devotions and gaining a new understanding of them as they are seen through Orthodox eyes." As with other elements of the Western Catholic tradition, in

The Saint Ambrose Prayer Book, tender devotion to the love of God as reflected in the Heart of the God-Man "has been put back into proper balance."

One of the most delightful aspects of *The Saint Ambrose Prayer Book* is its design. It is printed on high-quality thin "bible" paper, with gilt page edges, and bound in a flexible black vivella cover (a soft, attractive leather-like material), with a gold-stamped "IHS" monogram on front and back. Inside, the *Prayer Book* is beautifully typeset and illustrated throughout with devotional line art from antique Latin Missals, Breviaries, and other liturgical books.



CONTENTS OF THE SAINT AMBROSE PRAYER BOOK –

"The Christian's Obligations" (concerning Divine Worship, Fasting and Abstinence, Confession, the Holy Communion, Almsgiving, Marriage, and a Rule of Life) and *"Spiritual Outlines"* (e.g. the ten Commandments, the nine Beatitudes, the seven last words of our Lord, the seven (major) Sacraments of the Church, the seven deadly sins, the theological and cardinal virtues, the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, etc.).

Common Prayers which every Orthodox Christian of the Western Rite should know by heart (the Lord's Prayer, the Angelic Salutation, the Apostles' Creed, the Confiteor, the Gloria Patri, and Grace before and after meals) and *Daily Forms of Prayer* (morning, mid-day, evening, and bed-time).

Occasional Prayers for various needs, along with prayers of praise and thanksgiving.

Devotions for Holy Mass, including the full text of the Liturgies of Saint Gregory and Saint Tikhon, as well as prayers before and after Mass, counsels for communicants, and the Offices of preparation for, and thanksgiving after, Holy Communion.

Material for Penitents, including instructions on the Sacrament of Confession, forms for the examination of conscience, the manner of making Confession, and the Seven Penitential Psalms.

Devotions for the Sick and the Dying, including the Offices of the Communion of the Sick, the Sacrament of Holy Unction, and the Commendation of a Departing Soul.

Prayers for the Dead, including the text of the Requiem Mass, the Absolution of the Dead, and prayers at the graveside.

Two of the most important para-liturgical devotions of the Western Church – *The Way of the Cross*, and *The Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament*, along with devotions for visits to the Blessed Sacrament.

Various Devotions to the Holy Trinity, the Holy Ghost, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin Mary (including the Rosary), Saint Joseph, the Holy Angels; *Litanies* (of the Holy Name, the Passion, the Precious Blood, the Church, the Saints, for Missions) and *Novenas* (for Christmas, Pentecost, Feasts of Our Lady, for a Departed Person), along with a *Visit to the Christmas Crèche* and short *Ejaculatory ("arrow") Prayers*.

* For an excellent scholarly overview of the development of this tradition in the medieval English Church, see Eamon Duffy's *Marking the Hours: English People and Their Prayers, 1240-1570* (Yale University Press, 2007).